

PART IV: ACTION PLAN – “HOW DO WE GET THERE?”

A. Using the *Plan* as a Yardstick

Objectives that can help achieve Rhode Island’s ambitious vision are found in the *Economic Development Policies and Plan* (RI Statewide Planning Program, 2000a). These objectives are meant to be both attainable and measurable, and to furnish a foundation to guide public investment toward their fulfillment. They address broad topics and provide a basis for a cohesive economic development action plan.

The policies under each objective are discrete steps toward accomplishment of that objective. Each policy represents a single action. Each objective is the end or target of a series of such actions.

Each proposal received for inclusion in Rhode Island’s CEDS is screened against these objectives and policies, as well as other criteria (see Part V). All proposals are required to satisfy (implement) at least one *specific* objective and policy in the *Plan*. These objectives and policies are as follows:

- Objective A: Employment

Provide at least 34,200 new employment opportunities for Rhode Island residents by the year 2020, achieving and maintaining full employment and reducing unemployment and underemployment.

Policies to achieve Objective A:

1. Improve opportunities for productive employment with highest priority given to those economic development activities that have the potential to upgrade the skill and wage levels of the state’s resident labor force. Target public economic assistance of any type to those applicants that can increase the average wage rate in their industrial sectors.
2. Promote expansion and recruitment of industries that offer career opportunities for both secondary and post-secondary school graduates.
3. Encourage and expand those social services, both in the public and private sector, that are necessary to facilitate the broadest labor force participation, including training, job placement, child care, health care, and transportation services.

4. Promote and develop the use of mass transit in order to eliminate spatial barriers to employment opportunities. Encourage development in densities high enough to facilitate the economical provision of mass transit.

5. Emphasize diversity of industry toward those sectors that demonstrate a steady employment pattern, avoid seasonal layoffs, and withstand cyclical downturns of the economy.

6. Expand educational and job training opportunities that have as their primary objective providing the state labor force with those marketable skills sought by employers that provide above average wage rates. Provide lifelong training and education opportunities that make the labor force competitive.

7. Eliminate barriers to employment based on race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnic origin through education and training as well as consistent enforcement of applicable laws.

8. Encourage communities to plan for and accommodate the socioeconomic impacts of industrial and commercial development, such as by providing a variety of housing options to meet the needs of the local labor force.

9. Encourage industry, particularly those that employ urban populations, to locate in urban areas and to take advantage of public and alternative transportation modes where feasible.

- Objective B: Facilities

Work with economic development practitioners to encourage sustainable industrial and commercial development that advances the long-term economic and environmental well-being of the state, and is consistent with the State Land Use Policies and Plan, the Industrial Land Use Plan, and other applicable elements of the State Guide Plan.

Policies to achieve Objective B:

1. Reclaim brownfields by environmental remediation and encourage use of the “built environment.”

2. Conserve and enhance desirable existing industrial areas, office complexes, and concentrations of service activities to maximize the investment and utilization of existing infrastructure. New or expanded public sewer and water services and highways should be provided to industrial and commercial development only where such development is

appropriate in terms of the natural constraints imposed by the land, air, and water in the immediate vicinity of such development and vulnerability to natural hazards; and where the area is being developed at an intensity that is consistent with state land use policy, and when such development will not promote wasteful use of resources. When possible, an industry's needs should be matched with the appropriate site in order to maximize the return on the infrastructure investment.

3. Ensure adequate investment to maintain and improve a balanced, intermodal transportation system that meets the needs of the state's commerce and labor force. Make the transit system and intermodal connections user-friendly for all members of the riding public. Maintain shipping channels and recognize the economic potential of T. F. Green Airport and other state airports.

4. Encourage higher densities, mixed uses, careful design, transit and pedestrian-friendly land use and development patterns, and location near existing hubs and corridors to avoid "sprawl." Maximize the use of alternative modes of transportation, such as bicycling, walking, and mass transit.

5. Relate industrial and commercial development to overall land use by promoting the use of development controls and performance standards that mitigate natural hazards and conflicts with other land uses and activities.

6. Encourage investment by the public and private sectors that will stabilize and improve housing and commerce in deteriorating urban areas.

7. Promote the control of land development along arterial highways in order to preserve their functional integrity, capacity, safety, and appearance.

8. Contribute to the stabilization and redevelopment of central business districts through the provision of supporting services such as transportation access, parking, utilities, and police and fire protection, as well as the adaptive reuse of historic buildings that contribute to the stabilization and redevelopment of such areas. Viable economic reuses should be found for historic buildings that can contribute to the economy. Ensure that all reconstruction and redevelopment meet current natural hazard mitigation criteria.

9. Designate sites in developing communities and in or near smaller urban centers in rural communities for industrial or commercial development as needed to meet state and municipal economic objectives. Select locations with natural characteristics favorable for economic development that have or can be supplied with the public facilities and services necessary to support the type of economic activity planned, and that are readily accessible to a labor force. These locations must be consistent with the general development patterns set forth in the state land use policies and plan element and with all other applicable elements or provisions of the state guide plan. Sites selected, and the economic activities

that use these sites, should be compatible with the scale, historic character, disaster preparedness, and other aspects of the surrounding community.

10. Locate industrial development causing other than domestic waste discharges in areas served either by public sewerage systems or by appropriately permitted and maintained private systems.

11. Support agricultural base to include turf, ornamentals, vineyards, forestry, field crops, dairy and livestock. Seek alternative niche markets to support smaller, more diverse farms. Promote the preservation of prime farmland and provide the technical support to keep agriculture environmentally and economically sustainable.

12. Encourage development of sport and commercial fisheries both inshore and offshore up to levels of maximum sustainable yield by supporting the provision of appropriate infrastructure, research and training facilities, aquaculture, management activities, and enforcement of water quality standards. Reserve suitable port access areas for commercial fishing vessels.

13. Encourage new industrial development in the coastal zone that places a priority on the maximum efficient and appropriate utilization of existing marine infrastructure, such as the Port of Providence and Quonset Davisville.

14. Encourage areas used for commercial development to be selected and configured to make the most efficient use of scarce shoreline locations.

15. Promote tourism as a major industry, and encourage and support the use of the wide range of facilities that make up the industry's infrastructure.

16. Encourage the reuse of industrial land as industrial land to the maximum extent feasible.

17. Note areas most vulnerable to natural hazards and locate development away from those areas whenever possible. Provide appropriate mitigating measures whenever such hazards exist.

- Objective C: Climate

Maintain a business environment conducive to the birth, sustenance, and growth of suitable industry and commerce.

Policies to achieve Objective C:

1. Promote the Implementation of a growth development strategy giving priority to economic development programs directed at the promotion, maintenance, and expansion of existing firms.
2. Encourage and promote locally and regionally initiated economic development efforts as set forth in the economic development elements of local comprehensive plans.
3. Attract and give assistance to those types of industry that best capitalize on Rhode Island's strengths, and are potentially most beneficial to the state's employment, the needs of firms, resources, fiscal soundness, and related development goals.
4. Expand all markets, in state, national, and international, for the state's products and services, through improved communications and promotion.
5. Encourage reservation of prime industrial sites through protective regulation or acquisition, recognizing the importance of factors such as topography and soil characteristics, availability of water and sewer service, access to transportation facilities, proximity to water bodies, and availability of labor.
6. Maintain public infrastructure, both structural (physical) and non-structural (social). Provide additional infrastructure where it is clearly demonstrated as necessary and in a manner that will protect the long-term health of the state's natural and fiscal resources.
7. Recognize Rhode Island's quality of life as an asset that improves the state's "business climate." Protect and enhance the quality of life by promoting sustainable development.
8. Recognize cultural diversity and heritage as major assets to be protected and promoted.
9. Recognize Narragansett Bay as a major economic resource.
10. Encourage initiatives to ensure a competitive and fair tax environment for all Rhode Island residents and businesses.

11. Work with local government officials to study and better understand the relationship between land use and property tax.
12. Recognize education as an essential component of economic development.
13. Encourage and promote initiatives aimed at creating competitive utility rates.
14. Enhance the affordability and reliability of the state's energy supplies by pursuing energy conservation and supporting wider use of indigenous renewable energy resources where environmentally benign and economically feasible.

B. “Long-term” and “Near-term” Strategies

The *Economic Development Policies and Plan*, like most elements of the State Guide Plan, has a planning horizon of 20 years. Objectives A, B and C of the *Plan* may therefore be considered long term. The policies to achieve them, on the other hand, are implemented in the near term. Following the policies can result in significant successes far sooner than 20 years.

Take, for example, Objective A: to achieve and maintain full employment over the long term, reducing unemployment and underemployment by providing at least 34,200 new employment opportunities by 2020. The second policy under that objective is to “promote expansion and recruitment of industries that offer career opportunities for both our secondary and post-secondary school graduates.” The growth in Rhode Island’s boat building sector is the direct result of our implementing that policy – with support and financial assistance from EDA. The expansion of this sector under the East Bay Economic Initiative has provided workers with job opportunities from design to assembly, as confirmed by the figures presented in this report in Part II (Table 10). The EBEI is a Rhode Island success story, translating into 260 new jobs in manufacturing over a six-year period and a 24 percent increase in employment in an indigenous industry. With multiplier effects considered, boat building, marinas and boat dealers now contribute over 4,200 jobs and \$129 million to the state’s economy. These numbers indicate commendable progress toward reaching Objective A.

Turning to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, it is now a *threshold requirement* of the Rhode Island CEDS for applicants to make a direct link to the *Economic Development Policies and Plan*. Applicants must cite the objective and policy in the *Plan* that is implemented by their projects. By instituting this requirement, Statewide Planning has given both a near-term (policy-oriented) and long-term (objective-oriented) character to successful CEDS proposals. If the applicant does not document the link in his or her application, the proposal will not be considered for the Priority Project List. If, on the

other hand, the proper citation is made and our review confirms that the project can implement that policy, the project is a candidate for listing. Assuming the project achieves a high enough score to make the List and eventually gets EDA support, its successful completion will be considered a milestone – again, real progress toward the longer-term objective, whether A, B or C.

Table 13 in Part V relates each project on this year's Priority Project List to the objective and policy it will help implement. The projects are listed in alphabetical order, by applicant. The table also supplies the anticipated start/stop date for each project, thereby serving as our implementation schedule.